

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents a comparison of the environmental impacts of the Channel Widening and Bypass Channel alternatives. It identifies an environmentally preferred alternative as required by CEQA and NEPA. Following this discussion, an overall recommendation is made as to which alternative best addresses the greatest balance between economic and environmental benefits.

5.1 Environmentally Preferred Alternative

The Channel Widening Alternative is considered the Environmentally Superior Alternative. This alternative would overall require less construction disturbance of biological habitat. Far fewer residences would be removed under the Channel Widening Alternative, requiring less relocation, and avoiding the significant long-term impacts resulting from the Bypass Channel that would permanently fragment the residential neighborhood on the west side of Mackey Avenue and parts of Guadalupe Avenue. A recreational trail would not be provided under the Channel Widening Alternative, however. The lack of this amenity would result in an unavoidable significant recreational impact in Reach 10C, where the pathway along the west bank adjacent to Old Almaden Road used by cyclists, walkers, and joggers could be removed. All other environmental impacts would be basically equivalent for both alternatives.

5.2 Recommended Alternative

The construction and long-term maintenance of the Bypass Channel Plan is recommended over the Channel Widening Plan or the No-Action Alternative because it would more substantially reduce the potential for flooding and have the greatest economic and environmental benefits, taking into account the project's mitigation measures. Although both plans would reduce biological impacts to less than significance, the Bypass Channel Plan would reduce all other environmental impacts, including those caused by flooding, to insignificant levels. The Bypass Channel Plan would accommodate the proposed recreational trail and amenities on new maintenance roads and adjacent areas that would not be provided under the Channel Widening Plan, and would mitigate all recreational impacts to insignificance.

The Bypass Channel Plan would substantially reduce the potential for public hazards and property damage by providing protection against an approximate 100-year flooding event, compared to the protection against an approximate 50-year event provided by the Channel Widening Plan. The greater economic benefits of flood protection, and other environmental and recreational benefits, would offset the Bypass Channel Plan's greater costs of construction and the need to relocate a larger number of businesses and to purchase a greater number of residences to be removed, as compared to the Channel Widening Plan. The Channel Widening Plan would not correct existing erosion problems except where they coincide with plan engineering features.

The No-Action Alternative would not provide protection from flooding hazards and would not provide recreational benefits of the river trail proposed by the City of San Jose. It therefore is not recommended over either the Bypass Channel Plan or the Channel Widening Plan.

Recommendations
